

From Our Readers

THE NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR ISSUE

Whether North Korea (the DPRK) is developing or has already developed nuclear weapons is a serious problem – for the countries in the region and for the nuclear non-proliferation regime as represented by the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the IAEA. The DPRK has succeeded in having a series of talks with the US government, while the IAEA and the UN Security Council are also devoting a great deal of time and energy to this problem.

However, the North Korean ‘nuclear issue’ is primarily a *Korean* issue – of which the nuclear question is only one component. There are many others: guaranteeing the security of both North and South, progressive mutual disarmament, meetings between the leaders of the two Koreas, exchange of visits between separated families, trade and economic relations, cultural exchanges, to mention only a few. The fundamental, all-embracing question is ‘Reunification of the Fatherland’.

Recent international discussion has focused almost entirely on the ‘nuclear issue’ and no solution seems to be in sight. Perhaps it is time to look at the ‘issue’ in a somewhat broader context, always remembering that it is a Korean problem and also a regional problem – as well as an international one. The countries in the region – notably China, Japan and South Korea – need to do some groundwork behind the scenes, ignoring deadlines (it may be a matter of years rather than weeks), seeking to bring about a climate in which the two Koreas may start talking again – not only about IAEA inspections but all the other things as well. The IAEA Board and the Security Council, and perhaps also the United States, should probably step aside for the moment, to allow the countries most

involved to see whether they can do anything, never forgetting that it is the two Korea who are the principal actors, and it is they who in the last resort must work out matters between themselves, without outside interference.

YOSHIO OKAWA
Advisor to the President
The Bank of Tokyo Ltd
Tokyo, Japan

ON THE CONFLICTS IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

The demise of the second Yugoslavia occurred almost simultaneously and ran a similar course with the upheavals and liberal democratic revolutions in the other, nationally more homogenous East-Central and South-East European countries of the former Communist bloc. The great similarity in symptoms and other characteristics of the crises throughout this region allows us to exclude the ethnic, national and religious cleavages as *the cause* of the Yugoslav (and, for that matter, the Soviet and Czechoslovak) breakdown. Ethnic and national heterogeneity influenced only one, admittedly important, difference in the outcome – not the roots of the revolutions. The very different *incidence of armed* violence in the former Yugoslavia, USSR and Czechoslovakia also confirms this conclusion.

Yet it has become very popular to brand the present Balkan war as ethnic or even tribal conflict, particularly in the West. Most proponents of this characterization fail to specify what they mean by ethnicity. If we were to lump together all discriminating characteristics related to this term (race, color of skin, language, religion, culture, etc.), it would not allow us to understand, let alone to deal effectively with, the conflicts. And yet, if defined in a narrow sense (as the

widely and often erroneously believed common biological origin of a group) ethnicity still would not explain: several decades of peaceful coexistence between practically all ethnic groups in ex-Yugoslavia, the relatively high incidence of intermarriage, the high numbers of ethnically undefined 'Yugoslavs', and since the late 1980s the sudden flood of clashes between some (but not all) ethnic groups of the former Yugoslavia. Political polarization in the federal state initially ran mostly along ideological, economic, and regional lines, rather than along national/ethnic ones. Clearer national polarization came about as a *result*, not a cause (let alone *the* cause) of the ever-sharpening political struggles and armed clashes. And even today, after such bloodshed, there are still hundreds of thousands of individuals on the 'wrong' side of ethnic national divides. For instance, numerous Serbs in Croatia did not support the *Krajisnik* separatists. In the current bloody war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, people belonging to the same ethnic stock, speaking (and cursing in) the same language, even having the same family names – are slaughtering each other.

Many of these Bosnians profess different religions. And religious affiliation (but not non-affiliation) used to correspond closely with the official designation of an individual by nationality. Yet the bloody hostilities in Bosnia do not constitute a religious war either: believers and non-believers, Christians and non-Christians fight on all sides, with some Christians aligning themselves with the Moslems against other Christians while the dominant military roles are played by atheists.

Sharp conflicts in the Balkans have been generally correlated with differences in cultures and civilizations and thus with the three main religions in the region – Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, and Islam. Broadly speaking the Balkan war could be treated as a clash of civilizations. This macro-perspective, however, does not explain why the old fault line between three civilizations should produce yet another explosion at a particular time juncture. Some of the Balkan cleavages are no doubt ethnicity-related. Yet only confrontations where participants take sides highly corresponding with their common biological background could be properly called 'ethnic'. But such conflicts

occur relatively seldom – as when, for example, old historic grudges are compounded with ethnic separateness, contrasting religions affiliations, differing cultures, patterns of settlement and life-styles, distinct preferences in occupational stratification, and substantial differentials in adaptation to modernity and in average incomes.

Contrary to the ethnic hypothesis, the epicenter of the Yugoslav crisis lay, as in the other former Communist states, in the central political sub-system. The first symptoms of deep troubles were the economic shortages of 1981–1983. Gradually the crisis and disintegration spread, with some delay, to all other social sub-systems – culture, communication, intergroup and interpersonal relations in neighborhoods, schools, places of work, mass media, etc. Only later did the political polarization become correlated with the ethnic, national, religious, cultural, and civilizational fissures in the multinational conglomerate. But fundamentally the Balkan war has remained 'a continuation of politics by other means' – to recall the famous dictum by good old Carl von Clausewitz.

The armed struggles in the Balkans have been in fact conflicts about political power, territory under control, about scarce resources, about ideological preferences, about the role of the state in economics and of the military in the state, about strategies of economic and social development, about political pluralism and consociational democracy in multi-cultural societies, about human and minority rights etc. The current hostilities in Bosnia have concerned, very importantly, the place of that republic in the Balkans, between the West, the former East (Russia) and the Islamic world.

The present clashes in ex-Yugoslavia could be compared with the many conflicts which in the not-so-distant past have divided many of today's friendly Western nations – Spaniards, Dutch, English, Scots, Americans, Canadians, Belgians, Swedes, Norwegians, Austrians, Italians etc. Some of these conflicts in the West still continue and often cut across ethnic lines – recall the Irish, Corsicans, Flemish, Basques, Catalunyans, Canadians, Jurassiens in Switzerland etc.

The political perspective offers at least some hope when dealing with these con-

flicts. The ethnic view, on the other hand, promises none, since ethnic tensions in multiethnic societies are as lasting and perennial as ethnicity itself. If conflicts in the Balkans are perceived as basically political struggles with important social and economic ramifications and frequent national coloration, then they could be rationally treated as such.

The main protagonists of violence in ex-Yugoslavia would seem to have various mixes of motivation. These mixes include: historically conditioned collective memories of past violence; old interethnic and interreligious cleavages; clashes between political ideologies (liberal vs. Marxist, democratic vs. authoritarian, nationalist vs. supranational centralist etc.); conflicting economic interests, incompatible claims to territories, access to sea and natural resources; divergent geopolitical and strategic military considerations and anxieties; pure greed for political power by groups and individuals; base instincts and criminal proclivities, to mention only some.

This realization leads to the inevitable conclusion – there is no single solution or instrument for dealing with the worst conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, there is no panacea. What is needed are long-term strategies for transforming the economies, raising productivity, improving infrastructure and living standards, reducing unemployment, upgrading education and intercommunal cooperation, developing democratic political culture and democratic institutions, introducing and strengthening the rule of law, protecting better human and minority rights, etc. In the medium term, it would certainly be appropriate to seek institutional arrangements for nationally and culturally heterogeneous states and societies, including autonomies and regionalism. Consideration should also be given to border corrections and exchanges of populations if they can be achieved peacefully, by agreement or imposed by the UN Security Council. Accompanying mass criminal activities and terrorism cannot be stopped without the backup of recognized, lawful repressive measures.

The international community certainly cannot resolve the conflicts in the Balkans. However it could contribute to taming and containing them, to alleviating human

sufferings and to reducing the level of violence. Unfortunately, the worst conflicts in the region and the grave violations of international humanitarian law can not in the near future be stopped or brought under control without international pressure, sanctions and interference. Applying only economic sanctions, limited peace-keeping and providing humanitarian relief could well prove riskier than a strategy which would include peace-enforcement also without the consent of all the parties involved.

ANTON BEBLER

Ambassador

Permanent Representative of the Republic
of Slovenia to the United Nations
Geneva, Switzerland

A VATICAN SOLUTION FOR JERUSALEM*

The history of the city of Jerusalem is exciting indeed. Beginning with the Patriarch Abraham in approximately 1800 BC, the city has been dominated among others by the ancient Israelis, the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs, the Crusaders, the Ottoman Turks, the British, and the modern Israelis. In the course of these 4000 years, Jerusalem has become important as a holy centre for three world religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – which have existed simultaneously in the city for a very long time.

The political history of Jerusalem is horrible, to say at least. The religious history may serve as a better model for human co-existence. From the point of view of today's human values, the simple conclusion is that *politics failed while religion prevailed*.

Today, this view seems as relevant as ever. The local political powers on the spot seem more humane than those of long time ago – but not very much more competent when it comes to establishing a lasting and peaceful order. Therefore, we should ask: could not the problem of Jerusalem – a coincidence of supreme symbolic values – be redefined, away from a conflict between local political powers, and to a project for the world religions?

Through such a redefinition, the issue could be solved as a global problem involving more than two and a half billion people,